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## Congress set to pry off NSA's secrecy lid

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Washington—Ford administration attempts to keep a tight lid of secrecy on the National Security Agency collapsed yesterday when two congressional panels moved ahead with plans to hold public hearings on the supersensitive electronic intelligence organization.

In a separate development, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities announced that John N. Mitchell, attorney general in the Nixon administration, will appear at a public hearing today to answer questions about his knowledge of an illegal mail-opening program run by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mitchell, who resigned in

1972 to run Mr. Nixon's reelection campaign and was later convicted in a Watergate trial of perjury and obstruction of justice, will answer questions in the Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building.

That is where two years ago he appeared involuntarily before the Senate Watergate Committee and told of what he called "White House horror stories" involving illegal campaign practices.

He is expected to be asked what he knew about the CIA's 20-year-long mail-opening program and whether, as chief law enforcement officer in the ex-

ecutive branch, he approved something he knew to be illegal.

On NSA, the Senate committee had previously scheduled a series of public hearings focusing on certain agency practices that appeared to committee members illegal or unconstitutional.

Some of these practices, though made public unofficially in the past, were brought into the open by an official body for the first time yesterday, when Representative Bella S. Abzug (D., N.Y.) insisted on going through with a pro forma public hearing in which she personally released details of a government program to monitor international cable communications.

The program involved agents of both the NSA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, according to information gathered by her staff.

Mrs. Abzug, chairman of a House subcommittee on government information and individual rights, rejected an 11th-hour appeal from the Attorney General, Edward H. Levi, to postpone the hearing.

Efforts to proceed in an orderly manner were interrupted by quorum calls on the House floor, attempts by the Republican minority to postpone the session, and the failure of witnesses from the FBI and various cable companies to appear.

When the hearing finally did begin, Mrs. Abzug made public some results from the staff investigation, including charges that the FBI and NSA routinely examined all cable traffic routed through the Washington office of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and all cable traffic to selected countries routed through the Washington office of the ITT-World Communications.

The subcommittee heard testimony from two A.T. & T. officials, and then voted to seek subpoena power from the full Government Operations Committee to bring in witnesses who did not appear yesterday.

Later, in a press release, Mrs. Abzug said she would call Mr. Levi, Lt. Gen. Lew Allen, Jr., NSA director, and Clarence M. Kelley, FBI director, to testify at a later hearing.

Senator Frank Church (D., Idaho), chairman of the Senate Intelligence panel, said his committee decided to go ahead next week with public hearings on NSA activities.